SWCC
Southwest Coordination Center

Mobilizing Incident Resources
... throughout Arizona, New Mexico, and Federal units in West Texas.

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2007 PRELIMINARY FIRE SEASON OUTLOOK

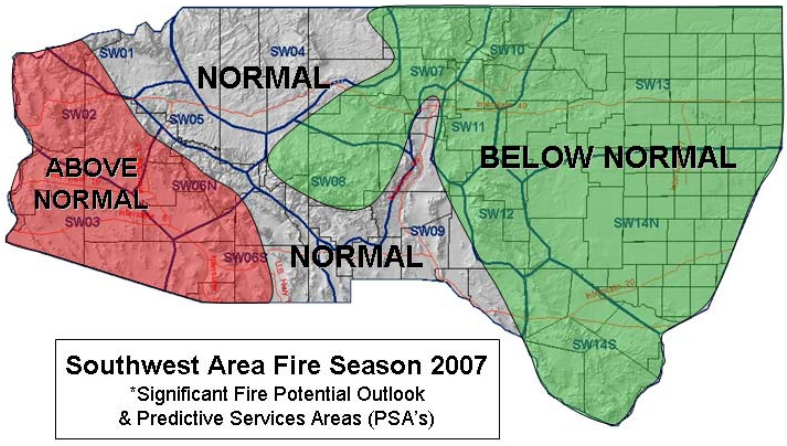
PRODUCT INTENT & DESCRIPTION

The intent of this outlook is to provide a scientifically based early look at factors affecting the potential severity of the primary Southwest Area fire season, normally April through July. Fire season potential is predicted in terms of the likelihood of significant fire events that will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which they originate. Areas highlighted as "Above Normal" are likely to require additional external resource mobilization.

SUMMARY

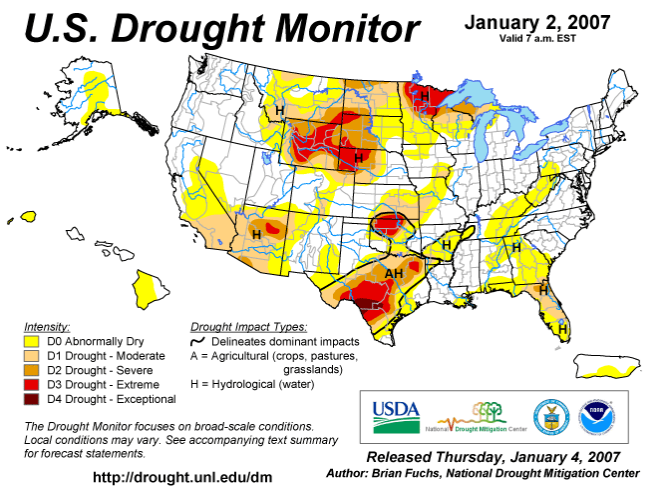
The overall 2007 Southwest Area fire season will be Above Normal across the lower elevations of Arizona and Below Normal to Normal elsewhere. The season will start late, end slightly later than usual with the monsoon onset and be confined mainly to lower elevation grass and brush regimes in Arizona. Overall, the need for additional firefighting resources from outside the area is expected to be near normal this season.

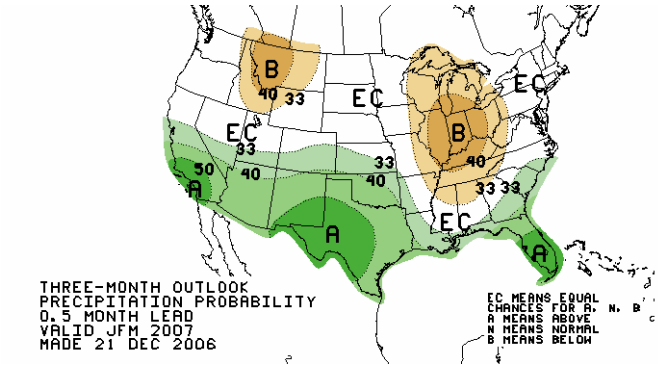
- Forecast of wet and cooler than normal conditions area-wide through April, with continued mitigation of long term drought.
- Fire potential in higher elevation, heavier fuel regimes to be mitigated by above normal moisture and compaction of fine fuels by snow cover.
- Abundance of carryover fine herbaceous fuels from the strong 2006 monsoon, leading to heavy fuel loadings and increased fire potential in the fine fuel regimes.
- Robust green-up and extended growing period in the herbaceous fuels expected to further increase the fine fuel loading and delay the fire season onset until late May.
- Monsoon to begin on time to one week late (early-mid July), with main moisture surge into Arizona and possible below normal rainfall east of the continental divide.
- Insufficient time between spring and summer moisture to develop a significant fire potential problem across the eastern half of the area.

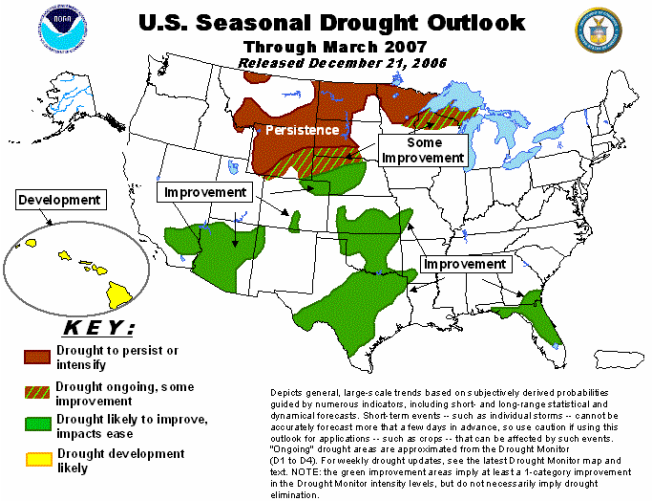


*Significant Fire Potential: The likelihood a fire situation will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which the fire situation originates.

SUPPORTING INPUT DATA







Most recent U.S. Drought Monitor image shows portions of the Southwest Area as Abnormally Dry or in Moderate hydrological (long term) drought. Long term drought acts to increase dead fuel loadings and, depending on more recent conditions, can lead to unusually low fuel moisture values in both live and dead fuels. Although portions of northern and eastern Arizona remain in elevated drought conditions, much of this area is not expected to see above normal fire potential this season.

Outlook for the months of January-February-March from the Climate Prediction Center shows relatively moist conditions forecast for the entire southwestern U.S. Moderate El Nino conditions are beginning to allow storm systems to affect the region with significant precipitation. Though forecasts suggest El Nino will weaken over the next several months, precipitation is expected to be above normal area-wide through the spring.

U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook shows the effects of the forecasted conditions on the current drought situation as shown earlier by the U.S. Drought Monitor. Current drought conditions mainly from the divide westward are expected to improve through March. This falls in line with the winter-spring forecasts, which support the expected normal to below normal 2007 fire season potential for much of the Southwest Area.

Predictive Services Group
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